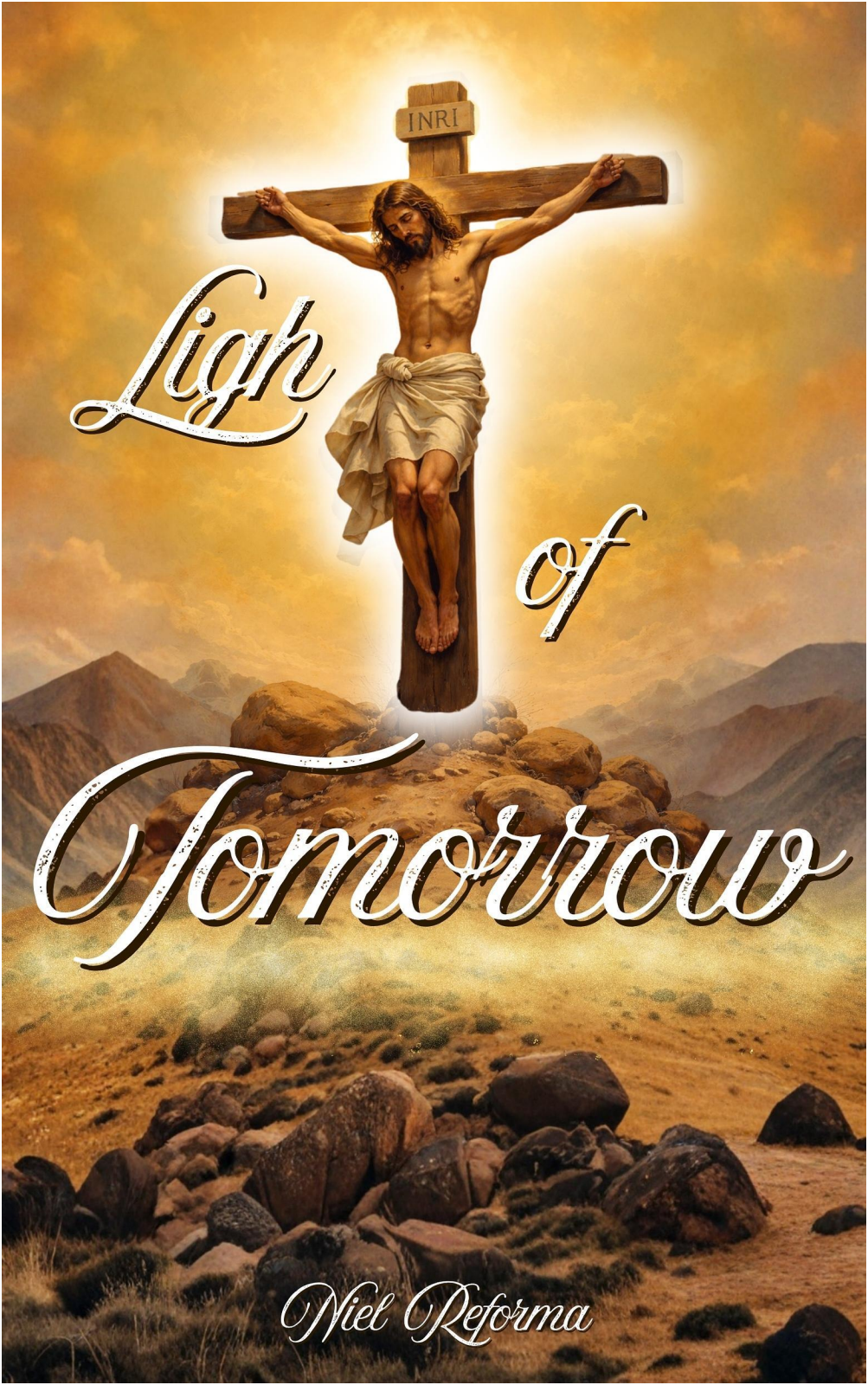
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Ligh
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Niel Reforma

Niel Reforma

Light of Tomorrow

Reflections of Faith, Nation, and Vocation

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This book is dedicated to those who find themselves lost and tired.

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Preface

This book is a collection of simple reflections written during the years 2025–2026, a time that became very meaningful in my life as a seminarian. These pages contain my thoughts about personal experiences in formation, the news happening in society, and the message of the Gospel that guided my understanding of both. Each reflection was written as a way of looking back at events and asking what God might be teaching through them.

Some parts of this book speak about vocation, struggles, and the journey of saying yes to God. Other parts talk about social issues, politics, poverty, and the challenges faced by our nation. By connecting these events with the Word of God, I realized that faith is not only something we practice in prayer, but something we live every day in real situations.

This collection is not meant to give perfect answers, but to share a journey of reflection, hope, and trust in the Lord. If these pages help the reader see God's presence in ordinary life, then this work has served its purpose.

1

“Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will”

When I reflect on this experience, the words of the psalm, “Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will,” remind me of something that is memorable to me.

Pauline Seeds

On June 11, 2025, I felt a mix of emotions—fear, sadness, joy, and hope. Trusting in the words I said before the altar, “Here I am.” It was not easy. It meant that I was leaving behind those things that I was attached to—family, friends, and the life I was used to. At that moment, I did not fully know what the formation year would demand from me since it was very mysterious, but I trusted that God had a reason for calling me there.

Batch 2025 aspirants of Society of St. Paul in their Acceptance Rite

There were nineteen of us who were accepted at the beginning. Each one had his own story, struggles, and reasons for entering. As the days passed, circumstances slowly changed. Some had to step back, and one was asked to enter the regency program for the meantime. In the end, only 13 continued the journey here inside. Seeing this made me realize that the call of God is personal. Not everyone is called to walk the same path at the same time. This reminds me of the advice and comforts of seniors: it was just like riding a bus; not all had the same destinations, and sometimes others were maybe only up to that point, it was their destination.

Journey to the Savior

This reflection also brings me to the story of the Magi. They were told, "Go and search diligently for the child," and they followed the star with faith. Every time that vocation was the topic, I couldn't stop thinking about the reason why my two very close friends left and left me here inside. Like them, I entered the seminary with many questions. I did not know where this path would fully lead me, but I believed that God was guiding me step by step. It reminds me of the words said in the book of the prophet Isaiah: "I have made you, and I will

carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you." The Magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they went home by another way. This reminds me that God's will does not always follow our plans. Sometimes, He leads us to a different road for our own good. That's why even though we got a different destinations on life, I kept praying and hoping that we'd find happiness in the path we've been chosen.

In my own journey, I am learning that obedience is not just about staying but about trusting. Trusting when things are uncertain. Trusting when the number of companions changes. Trusting when I feel weak or unsure. Saying "Here I am, Lord" is not something I say only on acceptance day. It is something I need to say every morning when I wake up, every time I feel tired, and every time I am challenged to grow.

Searching for the star

The formation year is teaching that vocation is not about being perfect, but about being open. Open to correction, open to changes anytime, and open to God's voice. Like the Magi, I am still searching; I am still learning how to offer myself fully to the will of God. My journey may not be easy, and it may not always go the way I expect, but I choose to continue following the star that God has placed before me. With faith and trust that I was spoken to by my acceptance, I continue to say, "Here am I, Lord; I come to do your will."

2

“There is always light. If only we were brave enough to see it”

Escudero’s graft complaint

Recently, Sorsogon City has been viral on social media due to its former governor, Chiz Escudero, getting involved in the corruption of the money of the government. In the recent article published by Philstar, Escudero faced a graft complaint over the money amounting to Php. 352,000,000.00 million that was supposedly a fund of the province for different projects, including those typhoon relief operations, but remained undisbursed for the past six years. This has been questioned by the Office of the Ombudsman against Escudero and several officials of the Sorsogon government.

Have pity on me!

Meanwhile, the gospel on Monday, November 17, 2025, talks about the blind beggar man who seeks healing from Jesus as he is on his way to Jericho. Jesus stopped for him and asked the man what he wanted, and then the man replied that he wanted to be healed from his blindness. This reminds people that we need to be persistent in our prayer; just like the blind man who shouted even more loudly, we must pray many, many times, trusting that God hears and will grant our needs in perfect time.

A blind beggar who approached Jesus for healing in Jericho

Light from darkness

The blind man desperately shouted, “Have pity on me! ” as he wanted to call out the attention of Jesus. In the other way around, there are funds for many projects, particularly for typhoon relief operations, that have remained undisbursed after long years. This shows that God instantly responds to the cry of the poor, while the news shows the state of the alleged failure and silencing of the people who were affected by those anomalies and calamities in the province. The use of power to heal the blind man, as observed in the gospel, shows the authority to restore the dignity of the beggar, while the news was about the abuse of power. Abuse of the power as it was misused and corrupted instead of the public works.

This kind of problem was connected to the gospel; the goal was to bring back the light from darkness. In the report, Ombudsmen were trying to bring back the light by investigating for accountability and transparency, while the gospel talks about the light by seeking a solution for the spiritual sight of the beggar. Above all, regardless of how bad things may seem or how bad things could get, there's always hope. There is always light. If only we were brave enough to see it.

3

“Limandaang Noche Buena”

May panghanda ka na ba ngayong Pasko?

There is this report that struck most Filipinos: the recent announcement of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) about a 500 pesos budget for a family with four members this Noche Buena. This became the subject of gossip and controversies on the internet. How come 500 pesos can buy some foods for Noche Buena?

500 budget

According to the interview of the secretary of DTI by GMA News, the 500 pesos worth of budget is enough to buy some goods for Noche Buena despite the current prices in the market. Because of this, people online were asking, “Is it enough?” Is it giving? Eh ikaw, papayag ka ba?

As we all know, Noche Buena is a celebration and tradition of every Filipino during Christmas Eve, where the family gathers together to have some dinner or a midnight celebration, usually after attending the Christmas Eve Mass.

It is a moment of celebration where food is served on the table. During this celebration, common dishes can be found on the table, such as spaghetti, grilled bangus, and a loaf of bread or pandesal with cheese as filling . For many, these kinds of dishes on their table already make Christmas feel complete.

Feeding of crowd

Similar as what happened at the Sea of Galilee, Jesus was walking up to the mountain, and suddenly, a huge crowd of people who were lame, blind, deformed, and mute, and many more, came to him and sought healing. Then, Jesus told his disciples how many loaves of bread and fish were left to them because he didn't want to send them away hungry.

As a community, we also had a culture that we shouldn't send away the visitors without offering them food on our table. Even though there was little food left, we still offered it to others. And just as Jesus gave thanks and broke the loaves and gave them to the crowd, they were all satisfied and even had a leftover of seven full baskets.

See, even though the portion is small, still it was able to satisfy the needs of everyone. We are reminded that even though it is small, we still need to be thankful and glad, for this was a blessing given to us.

Heart that satisfies

Since we are in the season of Advent, we are reminded to prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of God's son, our Savior Jesus Christ. So as we cleaned our houses and prepared foods on the table, we also had to clean ourselves through confession that enables us to be worthy for the body of Christ in the small portion of bread, the holy host. This is what reminds us all, even if the portion of bread is small or there is none on the table this Noche Buena, we are blessed to receive this blessing, and still we thank God for it.

So, again, satisfied ka na ba sa 500 pesos na noche buena? This is not how big the budget is, but how big our hearts are. Just as Jesus was able to satisfy the crowd with just a little of bread and fish, we are reminded that gratitude, sharing, and faith will give the true meaning of our Christmas. Whether our table is full or simple, Christmas remains a celebration of God's love, which no amount of money can afford. But again, can a ₱500 Noche Buena be meaningful for you this Christmas?

4

“The Hope of the Nation: Who Trust in the Lord”

Youth is the hope of our nation.”

“Youth is the hope of our nation” is one of the famous quotes of Dr. Jose P. Rizal from his time. He thought that the youth were the ones who would transform the entire country in the near future. But look at the country today; it is full of ghost project scandals and massive corruption and all the controversies happening online. One thing that struck me the most is Psalm 146:5—Blessed are they who hope in the Lord. What we need now is hope, just like the Jubilee Year of Hope—hope that someday, the country will have its leaders that have empathy for people and have a quality that serves the people first before themselves.

Rosas na Bukas

One article of Philstar that was published last February 10, entitled “Most winnable”: De Lima hopes Robredo will reconsider 2028 presidential run. In this article, Rep. Leila de Lima told the reporters that she believed that in the upcoming National Election 2028, former Vice President and Naga City Mayor Leni Robredo will have the first winnable chance among possible or potential opposition candidates against the other party list, which is the Duterte side. She believed that Robredo’s advocacy for clean and good governance is crucial to significantly reducing corruption in the country.

*Rep. Leila de Lima, former vice president and Naga City Mayor Leni Robredo, and Sen. Risa Hontiveros take a selfie after having lunch together © **Philstar.com***

Blessed are those with Hope

On the other hand, the psalm today is meant to bless those who hope in the Lord. Maybe this is the time we should think of the way we live for the future. Is it really in the hands of our dear youth, the hope for the future of the country? Or maybe the ones who are righteous, responsible, and good leaders are the ones who are the hope of the country. Maybe these psalms remind us that we should observe hope and trust in the Lord for all of our works and actions. Maybe also Rizal's quote is not for the present time; maybe it's time for those who are intellectually trained to meet the needs of people, with experience on the hardship and struggles of the people, the one who has a humble heart that will serve the people.

In regard to this, I see that hope is more than just waiting for a certain individual to take the lead or for young people to transform the country. Having hope is also a duty. Being young is insufficient; we also need to be well-behaved, knowledgeable, and morally pure. Many young people in our generation are active online, responding to situations and sharing their thoughts. However, being good is not the same as being outspoken. How can we become the hope that Rizal was referring to if our behavior does not demonstrate honesty and

decency?

Hope and Love for the nation

Now, Psalm 146:5 also works as a reminder that human leaders, despite their excellence, have limitations. Candidates will rise and fall, elections will come and go, but the Lord never changes. We risk disappointment if we rely just on politics. But if our hope is based on God, then conscience and faith will direct our behavior. In this way, young people can genuinely become the nation's hope—not due to their fame or influence, but rather to their character, which is shaped by their faith in the Lord. Maybe the real message is that the hope of the nation is not just about age or position, but about a heart that seeks justice, serves others, and remains faithful to God in every circumstance.

5

“Lord, forgive the wrong I have done”

Up to Congress

When I first read the article of Philippines News Agency entitled “Up to Congress’: Palace distances from VP Sara impeachment raps,” I felt a mix of emotions. There are part of me felt confused, another part felt concerned, and another part that just made me think more seriously about the politics in our country.

The article talked about how the Palace distanced itself from the impeachment complaints against Vice President Sara Duterte, saying that the matter is up to Congress to handle. As I reflected on this, I started thinking about how accountability works in government. Is there really a punishment for those incompetent politicians, or are they just making noise online? Leaders are chosen by the people, and they are expected to serve with honesty, fairness, and integrity. But when issues like impeachment come up, it makes me wonder: Who should really take responsibility?

Forgiveness

As I was thinking about this, the responsorial psalm from last day reminded me: “Lord, forgive the wrong I have done.” For me, this line is not just about asking forgiveness for big public mistakes, but also about recognizing responsibility, humility, and truth. Even though the article is about political processes, the psalm made me reflect on the human side of leadership. Leaders are not just officials, buy they are also people who can and may commit mistakes, just like anyone else.

Reading about the Palace saying that impeachment is up to Congress made me reflect on how responsibility can sometimes be passed from one institution to another. In my own life, I realized that I sometimes do the same thing. When something goes wrong, I might blame others instead of owning up to my part. It reminded me that admitting wrongdoing is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of maturity and sincerity. The psalm helped guide my reflection in a more personal way. "Lord, forgive the wrong I have done" made me look inward rather than only pointing fingers outward. It made me ask myself: In what ways have I been silent when I should have spoken? In what ways have I been careless with truth or responsibility? Even though I am not a government official, I still have a duty to act with honesty and integrity in my own small ways.

At the same time, this reflection also made me think about the importance of proper processes in government. If impeachment complaints are filed, it is right that Congress carefully reviews them. Accountability should follow the law, not just public opinion. But beyond the legal side, there is also a moral side, which the psalm beautifully highlights. Leaders, just like everyone else, must be willing to acknowledge mistakes, seek forgiveness, and commit to doing better.

Begins with humility

As I continue to reflect, I feel both concerned and hopeful. Concerned because political conflicts can divide people, but hopeful because discussions about accountability show that democracy is still active. More importantly, the psalm reminds me that real change begins with humility, repentance, and a sincere desire to do what is right.

Leadership is not just about power, and citizenship is not just about voting. It is about responsibility, truth, and moral courage. Whether we are leaders or ordinary citizens, we are all called to examine our actions, seek forgiveness when we fail, and strive to do better. And so, I carry with me the words of the psalm not just as a prayer, but as a guiding principle in how I think, act, and respond to issues in our community—Lord, forgive the wrong I have done.

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About the Author

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